Reflective Practice Portfolio

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I begin my morning commute to school, taking the subway uptown, then the cross-town bus to the East side of Manhattan, finally, walking the last six blocks to 102nd street. Along the way, I think about how my students are also making the journey to school. Some live just a few blocks away, in nearby housing projects. Others travel from the Bronx or Brooklyn, making their commute almost an hour. The school day is long for teachers and even longer for students. They begin arriving at 8:00 a.m. for breakfast and aren't dismissed until 4:00 p.m. However, most of the second and third grade students stay an additional two hours, participating in the afterschool program, which is run by teachers and coaches. Even though the days are long and full of challenges, it is a safe haven compared to the reality of living in East Harlem. It's hard to imagine a time when I didn't live and work in an urban area. Yet, just two years ago, I was working in the rural town of Raymond, Ohio.

Raymond is part of the Marysville School District, which is located about 30 miles west of Columbus, Ohio. After having graduated from Ohio University in 2003 and spending a year working with Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten students in a daycare setting, I was thrilled to get my first job teaching art in this small town. I was hired as a traveling art teacher, primarily working at Raymond Elementary but also teaching art classes at the intermediate school. As the district changed and teachers were redistributed, my travel assignments changed, but I always remained, at least part of the time, at Raymond Elementary. Raymond Elementary was even further removed from the city of Marysville. It was once a singular school in the town of Raymond, but over time became

part of the district of Marysville. Because of its history and continued traditions of the rural town, it operated at its own pace. There wasn't much change at Raymond Elementary. There had been only two principals in the last 20 years. Several teachers had spent their entire teaching careers at the school, had their own children attend the school and taught generations of the same family.

Like many of my students, I, too, grew up in a safe, sheltered community. My hometown of Sylvania, a suburb of Toledo, Ohio, is made up of middle to upper class families. My parents were very hard-working, my dad as an accountant and my mom worked in the medical field when she wasn't acting as a stay-at-home mom. Being the youngest of five children, I followed the tradition of attending Catholic school from Kindergarten to twelfth grade. I enjoyed knowing the same classmates for the nine years of elementary and middle school and continued my friendship with many of them in an all-girls high school. It was only natural that I would go to college, have a career and someday get married. I found it easy to relate to many of my students in Marysville that had similar values. However, not all of the families in Marysville had the same advantages that I had. There were many families who were struggling financially. One of the schools I traveled to served a trailer park community nearby and had a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. The families in Raymond were a mixture of farmers and middle class families who wanted more peace and quiet. Many of the students participated in 4H and raised animals. My eyes were opened to the different kinds of people in the world. However, nothing would prepare me for working with urban students in New York City.

East Harlem, or Spanish Harlem, is one of the poorest, roughest neighborhoods in New York City. Its schools match the description with only 49% of elementary students in East Harlem meeting the New York City and State reading standards. DREAM Charter School is one of the many charter schools in the area that exists to support families who want a better education for their children. The school was started in 2008 as an extension of a successful youth program aimed at giving troubled youth a safe haven through afterschool programming. 76% of families in East Harlem earn less than $50,000 a year, fewer than 13% of adults hold a college degree and less than 50% hold a high school diploma. Similarly, 50% of students at DREAM Charter School live in a single-parent or no parent household and 39% live in public housing. East Harlem also has the highest rates of asthma, childhood obesity and diabetes in the city. The students at DREAM are 63% Hispanic and 36% African American. They have a rich history and culture but are also part of a tough, inner-city where street smarts can take priority over school success. The school also serves a large population of students with special needs and English as a Second Language Learners.

DREAM students are selected through a lottery with preference to students who live in East Harlem. Like many new charter schools, the school is still enduring some growing pains. This year, in its third year, the school is serving 200 students in Kindergarten to grade three. DREAM believes in strict rigor, high expectations and a caring and supportive environment are the ingredients for a successful school. 25 students in each classroom receive individualized attention from their co-teachers, one general education teacher and one certified in special education or English as a Second Language. The school has a strong community of families that participate in morning breakfast, weekly

school meetings and family events. There is a plethora of administrative and support staff, one family coordinator, two full-time social workers, as well as specialists in P.E. / health, music/theater and art. The school hallways are covered with examples of student writing, math work, graphic organizers and artwork. Character education is evident from the "caring" and "work smart" medals students proudly wear around their necks, paper hearts describing student caring actions hanging on the wall and "Super Green" awards announced weekly to highlight good behavior.

I was hired after the school year had already begun. Beginning in October, I was confronted with some unexpected surprises. First of all, there was a shared art room and music room. The music teacher had already set up much of the room and developed her own procedures, so it was difficult to make the room feel like my own. Second, there were very few supplies and equipment available. After doing inventory, I was given an adequate budget to order all of the supplies I needed, but it took more than a month for supplies to arrive. I had to make due with just paper, pencils and crayons for the first month. Finally, the room had a sink with no plumbing and old tables that sometimes lost their latching and tilted in the middle of class. One day of the week, the music teacher and I had to quickly move the tables and chairs in the room to transition from music to art in just five minutes between classes, and then transition it back for the afternoon. Although these logistics took some getting used to, the student population was perhaps the most difficult of all. The large amount of students with emotional and behavioral disorders made teaching to the whole class challenging. I found myself overwhelmed and stressed out with little knowledge of how to adapt my teaching to the students' different

needs. All of these factors influenced my curricular and assessment development throughout the year.

Chapter 2: Searching for a Meaningful Curriculum

"Perhaps the closest thing to a foundational (or at least an organizational) principle for contemporary education is the theme of investigation. Create curriculum that encourages students to investigate questions relating visual and social phenomena" (Gude, 2000).

Beliefs and Values about Curriculum

Curriculum is defined as "what students have an opportunity to learn under the auspices of schools" (McCutcheon, 1988). In other words, it is what schools intend for students to know. In art education, curriculum is usually mandated by national and state standards, benchmarks and school district curriculum guides. Unlike other subjects, arts education rarely relies on textbooks or sequential units. In many cases, art educators feel the freedom to design art projects, lessons and activities that meet the students' interests or even their own. This can be challenging for art educators, yet also liberating. My own art curriculum is a reflection of my growth as a teacher. By reflecting on both the failures and the successes, I have gained insight on the ingredients needed to create a meaningful art curriculum in an urban elementary classroom.

Prior to enrolling in Mostly Online Master's Program in Art Education at Ohio State, my curriculum consisted of the use of a variety of media, lessons that included diverse artists and multicultural art forms and an inconsistent and shallow use of big ideas. Dr. Walker's course, *Issues in Art Education,* helped me to understand how big ideas are used to help students investigate issues that are important to understanding themselves and the world around them. "[When] education shifts from a dominant disciple-based orientation to a focus on 'real life' issues, problems, and skills, students will find their

learning more meaningful and will be more active participants in it" (Walker, S. R. and Stewart, M. G., 2005). Dr. Walker's course also helped me understand how contemporary artists use big ideas in their work. Alfredo Jaar stated, "I've never been capable of creating a single work of art that just comes from my imagination. I don't know how to do that. Every work is a response to a real-life event, a real-life situation" (Art 21, 2007). I began to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in many my own units. However, it was not until I took Dr. Eisenhauer's *Designing Meaningful Art Curriculum* course that I really started to understand the parts of a unit that are needed to build a meaningful and cohesive art experience.

Throughout Dr. Eisenhauer's course, we were given assignments that challenged us to grow as educators and reflect about our own beliefs and practices about the art education curriculum. The first readings were powerful. Olivia Gude's "Rubric for a Quality Art Education" and "Investigating the Culture of Curriculum" helped to validate some of my own beliefs about art education. "Ideally, the art curriculum should be diverse in content, media, activities and skills. It should recognize the importance of dialogue, adapting to students' needs and challenging students. Lastly, it should always be evolving" (Gude, 2000). My own curriculum had proved to be diverse in content, media and skills. Yet, I seemed to be using the same formula for each unit. I introduced the artist or artwork, students discussed what they saw, I showed them examples of the art project they would be working on and then they began a sequence of steps to get to the end point. The students' art were lacking originality and meaning. I had a hidden curriculum that there was only one correct way to create each art project.

Designing a Meaningful Curriculum also included a strong focus on contemporary artists' and visual culture's role in art education. In viewing excerpts of Art 21, I was able to see how the contemporary artists Pepin Osario and Do Ho Suh both explore the idea of home in very different ways. I realized that in my own curriculum, there was a strong focus on traditional artists as opposed to contemporary artists. My students were very familiar with 18 and 19th century painters like Picasso, Monet and Matisse. They also knew about some untraditional artists who pushed the definition of art like Warhol, Pollock and Haring. They were even introduced to several forms of nonwestern art. However, they knew very little about living, working artists. My hidden curriculum was teaching students that artists had to be dead in order to be important. I was one of the teachers Gude talked about in *Investigating the Culture of Curriculum.* "These emerging teachers, like many teachers currently in the field, are imaging their curriculum within the style, content, and methods of their earlier education, rather than reflecting the reality of contemporary art and their own understandings of contemporary culture" (2000). I was teaching how I had been taught and not reflecting the changes that had taken place in the art world.

In addition to a focus on contemporary artists, the curriculum course also covered the emergence of visual culture in art education. Paul Duncam states that the study of visual culture enhances students' education. "Such practices are sometimes promoted as ideas development and the development of any ideas students might have seems way better than yet one more color wheel or highly rendered pet animal" (Duncam, p. 12). In my teaching experience, I had attempted to use visual culture in my curriculum only a few times and usually connected it to a unit on Pop Art. It was an area of the curriculum that I

was interested in, but hesitant to embrace it because it was something I hadn't seen done at the elementary level before.

The culminating assignment from Dr. Eisenhauer's course was the most meaningful to me, as it taught me how to put all of the components of planning a unit together. During the process of creating a unit plan, I discovered how to enhance my practice by devoting time for students to develop personal connections to the big idea and build their knowledge base. The course also introduced a new element to my unit planning, incorporating two artists that use the same big idea in different ways. Designing my unit plan and reading other educator's unit plans helped me to understand the importance of each component and how they work together to help students make connections between themselves, art and the world around them. I realized how the big idea, essential questions, artists, and student activities all fit together to create meaningful learning opportunities.

Developing Meaningful Curriculum

Going into a new school year and a new school, I knew that I had a unique opportunity to start fresh with my curriculum and instruction. In the past, I had always developed a scope and sequence for each grade level, highlighting the art products and media used for each. This year, I began with a similar graphic organizer, but added to the sections to include "big idea", "related topic", "artists" and "art problem". I found that having all of these options helped me to start planning with what I was comfortable with first. If there was a project that was really successful in the past, I might begin with that and work backwards to find an artist and big idea that related to it. Other times, I found that starting with a big idea helped to inspire an art problem. The result was a baseline for

the year that reflected my desire to embrace big ideas and still maintain the variety of media and art activities needed to give students a quality art education. I also made a strong effort to include contemporary artists such as Do Ho Suh, Juane Quick-to-See Smith and Kelly Jean Ohl.

After getting through the beginning of the year procedures, I was excited to begin with a unit plan that incorporated the new knowledge I had gained from Dr. Eisenhauer's course. I began with the big idea of "place" and the related topic, "my neighborhood". Second grade students began investigating this theme by participating in class discussions, sketching and sharing about places in their neighborhood that were special to them. Making personal connections to the big idea was not something I had previously done much of in my prior teaching. I had always begun a new unit by introducing an artist or art style that was going to be the inspiration for the art making activity. After learning about the artist or style, students would immediately begin a step-by-step approach to creating artwork in a similar style. If I was using a big idea in the unit, I might introduce it briefly as it related to the artist, but I would not devote significant class time for students to make connections with it. Gude states that "a curriculum should be rooted in the life experiences and interests of the students" (Gude, nd). I sought to make this first unit about the life of my students and, as a result, the students' comments and sketches were thoughtful and personal.

In order to build knowledge, I brought in images of familiar places that were found in the students' neighborhoods. Students were enthusiastic and excited to share about how the streets, apartment buildings, restaurants and shops related to their lives. Then, students viewed two paintings that depicted different types of places. One was a house in

the country and the other was a factory in an urban area. I wanted students to discover how the artists related to the idea of "place" by painting landscapes that evoked mood. However, I noticed restlessness in most the students as I tried to engage them in a discussion about the artworks. It was clear that the students didn't relate to the paintings in the same way as the photographs.

Another component of the unit plan that I learned about in Dr. Eisenhauer's course was the idea of artistic knowledge building. In previous years when I taught a cityscape project using cardboard brushes, students were not given time to experiment with the media first. Instead, they began creating buildings with their cardboard "brushes" immediately. However, the curriculum course inspired me to make time for students to gain knowledge about the medium before beginning their final artwork. After students had learned about the big idea and artworks, students were given the cardboard strips to dip in paint and stamp into a combination of lines and shapes. Some students experimented with thin, thick, straight, long and short lines; while others began to create shapes that resembled houses and buildings. They were truly building knowledge about the artistic process.

After these initial activities, I was eager to see how students would combine their personal connections with the art knowledge that they had gained in a final painting of their neighborhood. Some students' paintings used lines and shapes to depict the ideas they had put into their initial sketches: apartment buildings, stores, schools, libraries, and other buildings that were part of their lives. Other students' art were completely covered with black paint, thrown away or destroyed because they didn't like how it looked. It was clear that some students were struggling with the media or having trouble sharing

materials and were unable to succeed. I decided to modify the lesson to allow for drawing instead of painting. In the end, all students were able to communicate why their neighborhood was special to them through their art.

Reflecting back on this first unit, I failed to acknowledge the developmental level of the students. As Gude states, "a good curriculum is developmentally appropriate. The curriculum accepts the students in the complexity of their skills and lack of skills. A curriculum is sensitive to the developmental issues of a given age group and place and should select art, projects, and goals accordingly" (nd). My school has a high population of students with special needs, including social-emotional disorders. I expected that the students knew that mistakes are part of the learning-process, that they knew how to share materials with others and that they knew how to follow clean-up directions. However, these skills needed to be taught and, instead of teaching them, I gave up on the project and modified it to one that had minimal clean-up or challenges.

In the third grade, students were also focusing on the big idea of place. The essential questions that were used to guide activities were "Where do your shoes take you?" "What is it like to walk in your shoes?" and "What do your shoes tell about your journey?" The students connected to the big idea by listening to a story about a boy who immigrated to the United States from El Salvador. This story was relevant to many of the students in my school whose families emigrated from other countries. Then, students began to draw and write about where they have gone in their shoes. These initial drawings showed evidence of a strong connection with the big idea, depicting basketball courts, parks and family members' houses.

Challenges came when I introduced the artist, Juane Quick-to-See Smith. Students were given reproductions of her artwork that depicted shoes and socks. In groups, they worked on the questions, “What do you see?” and “What does it mean?” Each student was given a special job to do during the activity such as “group leader”, “supply monitor”, “recorder” and “wild card”. After explaining each role, students began choosing their job and working on the activity. However, the students did not seem to understand how to interpret art. After more instruction on how to look at the artwork and write down what you see, most groups were able to identify what parts in the image, observing objects, words, colors and shapes. However, the next question, “What does it mean?” was confusing for students. Only one group gave a guess about what the artwork was about. I realized that the activity wasn’t developmentally appropriate. The students hadn’t had experience with art interpretation before and the group format was also a new way of learning for them. As a result, there was arguing and frustration among many of the groups.

The next day, I decided to explain a little about the artist and her work and then quickly move on to the art-making portion of the lesson. Juane Quick-to-See Smith’s artwork often uses objects, such as shoes, to represent her cultural identity and place in society. Relating to the idea of place was a natural connection, because shoes represent a person’s identity as well as serve a purpose to help people go places. When students were given the instructions to use their own shoe as the subject of their drawing, they were immediately enthusiastic. I also provided pictures of a variety of types of shoes for students to pick from for those that didn’t want to draw their own shoe. The students completed many looking and drawing exercises in order to build confidence in their

drawing ability without the fear of failing. These exercises were successful in ways that some other art-making activities had not been, because the focus was on the process, not the product. Finally, when students were able to draw their shoes independently, they began their final line drawings. Each drawing was completed by adding a drawing of a place where the student goes in their shoes inside the interior of the shoe.

The students showed a high level of motivation during this art-making process. Viewing a contemporary artist who works with the big idea of "place" helped to students to think about the big idea more conceptually. Allowing students time to relate to the big idea through stories, drawing and writing led to the development of personal connections. However, the unit would not have been as successful if it didn't contain the component of shoes. Because shoes are an important status symbol for many urban youth, the students took pride in choosing a shoe from the selected images or using their own shoes as the subject of their drawing. As a result, the students were motivated to complete their artworks and were even willing to take risks with new drawing techniques.

In my final unit example, I will discuss how second grade student investigated the big idea of "stories" through the creation of shadow puppets. They began the unit by creating a class web of the different ways that people tell stories. Students could relate easily to this concept and the web formed quickly, including common types of storytelling like writing, talking, movies and pictures. Then, students imagined that they were a character in their own story and thought about what their dreams were the future. Students began building knowledge about the big idea by drawing a self-portrait in the future, depicted themselves doing activities such as singing, playing baseball and teaching. The results were successful and showed a strong personal connection to the big idea.

On the second day, the students viewed shadow puppets from different cultures in Asia. After talking about what they noticed about the images, students were given a brief background on how shadow puppets are used to tell a story in these cultures. They were excited to see the examples I had made of shadow puppets that depicted modern-day people like doctors, astronauts and baseball players. In order to build on the students' art knowledge, students viewed a demonstration of how to create a skeleton for the shadow puppet using popsicle sticks. On large tagboard, the students tried to arrange their sticks to create a person, but they struggled with a few things. First, the paper was so large that the students couldn't all sit in their assigned seats to work. Some had to sit on the floor and the room quickly became crowded, noisy and unfocused. Second, some students weren't able to visualize what a person's body looks like without an example in front of them. Although the students didn't complete their skeletons that day, there was one successful element of the lesson. Students had a chance to explore the medium they would be using; this time was actually a form of "knowledge building".

On the following day, I made some changes to the activity that proved to be successful. I began with a demonstration of how to work with a partner to create a skeleton with sticks. I showed how the first person plays the role of a model, holding a still pose of the activity, while the second person is the artist, arranging their sticks to create a skeleton according the model's pose. Students were excited to play these two different roles and also enjoyed working in pairs. As a result, the students created skeletons that reflected actual body movements in a way that was more true-to-life than even my examples had been. The classroom environment was also more focused with all students working together and no one sitting on the floor.

Once all of the students had created their skeletons for their shadow puppets, students began drawing the outline of their figures around the sticks, cutting them out and drawing a more detailed figure on the front of the puppet. This also created a few problems. Since the skeleton portion of the lesson took multiple days, some students forgot what their original idea for their puppet was. Others had been so used to working with the sticks, that they couldn't understand how the sticks weren't supposed to be seen from the front, only as a support on the back of the puppet. Finally, cutting around the sticks was extremely difficult for some students, so it required a lot of teamwork so students could complete this. After many class periods devoted to these crucial steps, the students were beginning to tire of the project. Problems with puppets breaking apart or students who were falling behind during class time were frustrating for me and the students.

In order to keep the motivation level high, I decided to devote some time to rebuilding the personal connections that students developed in the beginning of the unit. The class participated in a critique of student puppets from another class. Although the puppets were not completed, they had enough information to interpret. As I held up each puppet, students described what they saw and talked about the meaning behind it. Students were able to interpret what each student artist's dream was, supporting their opinions with details from the body pose and drawing. The students were excited to see other students' work and motivated to get to work on their own puppets. Imani said, "It shows me about what other people make and not just what I make. It tells me what they wanna be." The students seemed to realize that their artwork was communicating a story to others.

The puppets were completed with markers to add color to the students' drawings. Originally, I had planned for students to paint their puppets, but I was concerned by how detailed the students' drawings were, the large size of the puppets and the lack of table space. I decided that using markers would work best. The results were mixed. Some students showed pride in their work and their puppets clearly reflected their dream for the future. DeUndre said, "My puppet's about an art teacher who loves drawing and it's about me and my brother always drawing stuff." Other students seemed to understand the meaning behind their puppet, but their work didn't reflect it. Jaylene's puppet was covered with words, naming her favorite subjects at school. However, when she described her puppet, she said "my puppet was about a girl who has a little kid and she's a singer – a great singer. I chose to make that kind of puppet because I think I am a really good singer and I like singing." Keeping in mind one of Gude's standards for a quality curriculum is that it "aids students in developing a visual language that allows them to communicate stories about their lives" (nd), students who finished early wrote a story about their puppet. Jolita reflected on the experience of writing about her artwork, "not only art helps us express ourselves, but writing helps us express ourselves. It helps me tell people what this is about and why I am doing this."

Conclusion

"One of the more compelling reasons to work with big idea themes is the highly motivated and focused response of students to classroom art assignments" (Sakatani &Pistolesi, 2009). In my own experience, I found that my students were highly motivated through the use of big ideas. Reflecting on the experience of making a puppet of their dreams, the second grade students demonstrated a strong personal connection and sense

of pride to their artwork. Imani said, “It [the big idea] made my art much more better because it’s not just a drawing, it can actually tell you about my work.” “My puppet means a lot to me because it’s about me growing up to reach my dreams” Jolita said, comparing the experience to one less meaningful, like a making a frog puppet. “You couldn’t put no feeling in it because it would just still be a plain frog” she said.

The students were able to form strong personal connections to big ideas through activities that valued their own experiences and further knowledge-building. This was done successfully through initial activities like creating a web, listening to stories, and drawing and writing about their experiences. I found that devoting time for personal connections and knowledge building prior to learning about artists or art techniques helped build a strong foundation for the unit. Jolita showed evidence of these strong connections by stating, “I really put my feelings into that artwork”. It also became important to maintain the students’ personal connections by planning time to reflect on the artistic process throughout the unit. When students worked on the art product for many consecutive days, it was necessary to stop and refer back to the big idea. Interpreting other students’ artwork, writing about their own or discussing the artist became an essential component for my students to continue to make meaningful connections to the big idea. DeUndre showed evidence of this personal connection throughout the unit, saying, “I put everything in my puppet, even my heart.”

Finally, selecting the right artists and artworks was another important ingredient in creating a meaningful curriculum. As the first art teacher at a new school, I struggled with finding artworks or reproductions to incorporate into the classroom. Many of the artworks I selected were based on what posters I had been able to find. For example, in

the second grade unit on "place", students looked at two different landscapes, Edward Hopper's *House by the Railroad* and Charles Sheeler's *American Landscape.* I realized that the artists depicted the subject matter of place, but not the big idea of place. Trying to elicit a thoughtful discussion of the big idea was difficult when the artworks didn't challenge students to think beyond using art to illustrate a theme. In contrast, the third grade students were highly motivated to explore how shoes were present in our visual culture. Conversations flowed easily about what different shoes were used for, what kinds of shoes were worn by students and how the shoes differed. The artist, Juane Quick-to-See Smith was relevant, but the interpretation activity would have been more successful if the image had been projected on a large screen instead of printed on computer paper. A missed opportunity I now realize is failing to incorporate visual culture into the shadow puppet unit. It would have been interesting and motivating for students to compare the shadow puppets from Asia to contemporary American puppets used for plays and movies.

My curriculum demonstrates that big ideas are the key to developing meaningful curriculum. By focusing on building personal connections and knowledge, students can develop ideas that are original and significant. The use of relevant artists, artworks and visual culture helps students to gain understanding of the big idea and how it relates to the artistic process. As Gude states, "It is an eclectic, postmodern approach to curriculum construction--pick through curriculum artifacts, refurbish what is still useful, discard what is no longer necessary, introduce entirely new contents when needed"(2000). So as I reflect on my standby projects, throw out those that no longer reflect my beliefs and introduce new units that better represent my teaching philosophy, I hope to find that my

curriculum is becoming more and more meaningful to my students because “[curriculum] should always be evolving” (Gude, 2000).

Chapter 3: Assessment in the Elementary Art Classroom

Assessment in art education has always been a controversial subject. When I first became a practicing teacher, I equated assessment with grading. I utilized teacher-centered assessment techniques including generic rubrics and checklists in order to assign grades to over 400 students. Assessment was time-consuming and, because of vague criteria, seemed to be somewhat subjective. It was not until I took AE 731, *Assessment of Student Learning,* in the summer of 2010 that I began to think about the purpose of assessment as an integral part of the curriculum. AE 731 sought to examine both the practical and theoretical issues concerning art education in the classroom. Through readings, class discussions, group assignments and individual assignments, we examined the types and purposes of assessment in art education today, the relationship between assessment and curriculum and the differences between large-scale and classroom-based assessments. Mostly, we learned how to develop effective assessment tools for our own teaching practice. As a result, I am better able to align my curriculum with assessment tools and students are more aware of assessment criteria.

Beliefs and Values

Prior to AE 731, I viewed assessment as another term for grading. I struggled with developing assessment procedures that would accurately and effectively evaluate my 400 students. It was my least favorite part of my job and I often put off doing assessment until the end of a grading period. My school district utilized a 4 part grading system for art on their report cards. The first grade was an overall grade of “outstanding”, “satisfactory”, “weak” or “unsatisfactory”. “S+” was given for those students performing above satisfactory, but not quite outstanding, and “S-“ was given for students performing below

satisfactory, but above weak. Students were also given a numerical grade ranging from 1 to 4 on three sub-standards: follows rules and safety procedures, participates in class activities and shows effort, and displays knowledge and skills.

I developed a generic rubric for all art projects early in my teaching career. Using the criteria of artistic skills, neatness, creativity and effort, I gave student projects a number value between 1 and 4 for each criterion. These scores then determined the grade that students received on their grade card in the category "displays knowledge and skills". In addition, I attempted to keep a daily record of student behavior and effort in class. I used a checklist to assess students' behavior with a code for participating in class discussions. It was difficult to keep track of more than 400 students, so my checklists often had areas of missing information. Once again, I ended up trying to catch up on the missing information in the few weeks before the grading period. I relied on these checklists, along with my own memory and intuition, to assign each student a grade in the category of "following rules and safety procedures" and "participates and shows effort". During my first few months of teaching, the other teachers were surprised that I gave many different grades to the students. They expressed how the previous art teacher had just given everyone "S's" and "3's".

I persevered with my system of rubrics and checklists to create student grades each quarter, but I gradually became more aware of other issues regarding assessment. During my first few months of teaching, the fourth grade students had only completed two projects by the end of the first grading period. One of those projects was a self-portrait. Kaylee received high marks for her self portrait, due to a large amount of creativity and detail in her work. Because she was also a great student, I gave her all

"4's" on her grade card and an "O" for outstanding. The following quarter, Kaylee's projects were still very good but lacked some of the originality as her self portrait. As a result, she received an "S+" on her grade card instead of an "O". Her mother called me to ask why Kaylee's grade had dropped. The only answer I could give was to tell her that Kaylee hadn't excelled as much in the new media as she had with the first. I felt horrible trying to convince a parent of the reasons between those two grades. With only a limited number of projects to assess and little knowledge of the students, I felt more like a "grade fairy" than a qualified professional.

After the incident with Kaylee's mother, I became much more cautious with the grades I gave. I realized why the other teachers gave so many satisfactory grades with little variation. It was safe. In the next few years, I updated my general rubric a few times, finally settling on the five categories of content knowledge, use of elements and principles, neatness, creativity and effort. I felt that this new rubric allowed a stronger focus on concept, effort and ideas that would raise many students' grades to "3's", even if they were not artistically talented. As I graded projects, I kept in mind how the numbers would average out, sometimes erring on the side of a satisfactory, just to avoid being questioned by parents. I was also careful not to give too high of marks during the first grading period, thus giving students the chance to improve their grades over the course of the year.

Another routine that I had implemented in my class was creating portfolios. All year, students saved their artwork, sketches and practice activities. Then, towards the end of the year, each student made a portfolio to store their work in. The primary purpose of the portfolio was a way to transport their art from school to home. However, it also

became a drawing lesson as students designed the outside of their portfolio. For one or two classes, students would work on designing their portfolios while volunteers passed their artwork back. It was always exciting for students to see artwork from the beginning of the year that they had forgot about. They often commented on their favorite artworks or ones that they struggled with. However, their main focus was decorating the portfolio. After students had all of their work their portfolio, they would select one or two of their best works to put in the art show. At the end of the year, all artwork would be sent home in the portfolio. The portfolios were not used for reflection or to assess students.

Changes in Thinking

During the course of the week at Ohio State, in Dr. Parson's AE 731 class, I began to reconsider my beliefs about assessment. I found that many of the other teachers shared my struggle with meeting school standards on the grade card, juggling a large number of students and making difficult decisions about the quality of students' work. Dr. Parsons reminded us that there is a difference between judging a student and judging a work. I was reminded that assessment can and should be a valid measure of a students' learning. Most importantly, I realized that grading and assessment were not the same things. Assessment is about measuring a task, while grading can take many other factors into account, such as student behavior and attitudes. These insights led me to another looming question: if assessment wasn't just about grading, then what was assessment for?

Luckily, I was not left wondering for long. Dr. Parson's soon explained that "assessment is curriculum." "Good teachers constantly assess how their students are doing, gather evidence of problems and progress, and adjust their instructional plans accordingly" (Rudner and Boston, 1994). I realized that I am always informally assessing

my students' work and progress in order to inform my teaching practices. For example, during a printmaking lesson, I noticed students mixing up the order of the steps. On the next day, I prepared an illustrated guide to demonstrate the printing process. Thinking about assessment as an important part of planning instruction just makes sense. However, in the back of my mind, I was concerned with the time and effort it would take to implement meaningful assessment.

"In order to implement performance assessment fully, administrators and teachers must have a clear picture of the skills they want students to master and a coherent plan for how students are going to master those skills" (Rudner and Boston, 1994). Prior to the assessment course, I always planned my lessons with an art-making activity in mind. That product determined what big idea, artists and art techniques the students would learn. However, learning about Wiggins' and McTighe's *Understanding by Design* made me consider designing curriculum using the "backward design" process. This process involves identifying the standards, goals and objectives first; then determining how students will demonstrate their learning; and, finally, planning instruction and learning activities (Ohio Alliance for Arts Education, 2000). Once teachers know what they want students to learn, they can align their assessment strategies with the curriculum and teaching methods. The big idea, essential questions, objectives, learning activities, reflection activities and assessment tasks all make up the cycle of curriculum development and assessment.

Grant Wiggins' article, *Tests worth Taking*, describes the importance of designing performance tests that are aligned with the lesson objectives and learning activities. These tests should be rich, realistic and enticing. He relates the role that teachers play in

assessment tasks to the role of "architects", designing a building. The teacher decides what content to test and how to test it. Performance tests should be meaningful and authentic, simulating how knowledge is used in adult and civic settings. (Wiggins, 1992). McTighe also supports the value of authentic tasks, stating, "performance tasks should call upon students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a manner that reflects the world outside their classroom (McTighe, 1997). Finally, performance tests must score what is most important for students to do, instead of what is easy to score.

Other types of assessment were examined in AE 731 as well. As a class, we viewed and discussed a variety of different types of rubrics that serve different purposes. Rubrics that are specific and descriptive in language are especially valuable in helping to align assessment with curriculum development. If rubrics are clearly communicated to students, they can serve a dual purpose as effective teaching tools and criteria for judging students' learning. In addition to writing rubrics, McTighe also advocates using examples of student work to illustrate the different standards by which students will be assessed, deepening students' understanding of criteria. By making sure to include a variety of different approaches to art-making, students can also learn that there are multiple ways of doing things and avoid the "cookie-cutter" approach to creating art (McTighe, 1997).

Finally, the subject of portfolios as an assessment tool was examined. Unlike many teacher-centered assessment tools, the portfolio is student-centered, empowering students to take an active role in their learning. By participating in the portfolio process, "students are responsible for monitoring their own learning and for assessing the implications of their progress" (Rudner and Boston, 1994). There are two types of portfolios that are used, the process-portfolio and the best work portfolio. The process-

portfolio is an ongoing assessment that asks students to look back on their previous work, reflecting on their growth and learning. It includes works of varying types and quality, as well as varied levels of development. In contrast, the best work portfolio showcases only the best, finished works of a student, and can be expanded to use as competition.

Lesson Plan and Unit Development

> "*To teach effectively, we need to be clear about what we expect students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of our instruction. But performance-based instruction calls for more. We also need to determine how students will demonstrate the intended knowledge, understanding, and proficiency (*McTighe, 1997*).*

After recognizing the value of assessment as a tool for learning and not just grading, I knew I had to reflect on my old practices. As I began a new school year and new teaching position, I realized a unique opportunity to redefine what students needed to know, as well as develop new assessment tasks that would allow students to demonstrate their knowledge. I was eager to develop specialized rubrics in place of my old generic rubric and to use alternative approaches to assessment. I began with three goals for the year: to align my assessment procedures with the curriculum, to communicate assessment criteria more clearly and to make assessment more student-centered through the use of process-portfolios.

Using big ideas and essential questions was a primary concern in my curriculum development, and I had learned how to align student activities appropriately. Now, I had the added challenge of aligning the assessment tasks with these elements. I designed a unit for third grade students on the big idea of "place". Students had been introduced to

the term, “public art”, viewing sculptures by the artist, Jean Dubuffet. Through his art, students learned how some art is commissioned for specific public spaces. Students were very familiar with public sculptures, murals and mosaics in and around their neighborhood, but they had never considered how they had gotten there. Students were given the art-making challenge to design a sculpture for the city of New York. A mock letter from Mayor Bloomburg asked students to create a sculpture for the city and choose a location for the sculpture. Students were enthusiastic about this process. They began designing the cardboard pieces and constructing their sculptures. Finally, with the sculptures completed, students began to work on preparing a proposal for a public artwork. In this proposal, they chose a location for their sculpture and explained why that place would benefit from a public artwork. Then, they illustrated what the sculpture would look like in the location they had chosen.

This process entailed many of the aspects I would normally include in my curriculum. By using a big idea, essential questions, objectives for learning, knowledge-building activities and art-making opportunities, it didn’t seem like reinventing the wheel. However, I went about the process differently. I began with what I wanted students to know: to explore the process of creating a 3-dimensional sculpture and gain knowledge about how art is made and used by society. Then, I designed as assessment task: creating a proposal for a public artwork. As Wiggins advocates, I was using the “Backward by Design” process. The students’ work demonstrated understanding of these concepts. One student chose the location of Central Park, stating that it would make it beautiful and more people would go to the park. Another student chose the area in front of his

apartment building, reasoning that everyone in the building would see his artwork everyday.

After reflecting on the project as a whole, I realized that the activity was not as authentic as it could have been. For example, most public art is commissioned for a specific place, allowing the artist to submit designs for the artwork but not choose the space. Because students were exploring the big idea of place, I wanted them to have ownership over the place their artwork would be designed for. However, this resulted in a shallow understanding of the place they chose. The students did not research the location of the public artwork like a commissioned public artist would. Another aspect of the assessment task that was not highly authentic was the degree of freedom that students had to choose their media and method. I approached the unit as an introduction to sculpture. The art-making activity was chosen to reflect a similar concept as that of Jean Dubuffet. As a result, the students' artwork did not reflect characteristics unique to the place they chose.

Teaching Practices

Another goal was to communicate the assessment criteria more clearly to students. Because I had used a general rubric in my previous teaching positions, this goal required the development of specific rubrics for each unit. I began by writing the rubrics as an essential part of each unit. I realized that I didn't need as many criteria as my previous rubrics had used, since I didn't need to assess effort, neatness or creativity as single entities. Instead, I developed only two or three different criteria for each unit, using the lesson objectives whenever possible. For example, for the third grade unit on public art, there were three criteria: to demonstrate understanding of patterns using repeating

lines in their sketchbook and on their cardboard sculpture, to understand space and form by creating a 3-dimensional sculpture with cardboard shapes, and to illustrate the sculpture in a public place and write why that location would be a good place for public art. Each of the criteria was scored from 4 to 1. I included detailed, specific descriptions in each category, trying to paint an accurate picture of what each standard looked like.

The next step included communicating the criteria to students. I was able to communicate most of the criteria informally, as I was demonstrating procedures for drawing patterns and creating the cardboard sculpture. However, I had failed to show multiple, varied examples of completed sculptures. This became an evident problem when many of the sculptures began to look alike. The students had viewed limited examples and they had inferred that there was only one successful way to create the sculpture. In order to correct this mistake, I made sure to create many different examples of how to complete the proposal worksheet. As a result, students' proposals demonstrated a wide variety of different locations and reasons for their choices. At the end of the unit, students received a complete rubric listing all of the criteria and scoring. As a whole class, we read the criteria and students were able to reflect on their own work. Although a few students were able to understand and complete their self-assessment correctly, many students struggled with the content of the rubric. There are many students with special needs in the class, as well as students who are academically below grade level. It was difficult to keep students on track when many needed more individualized attention than I could give. As a result, many students left their rubric empty and I felt frustrated that the activity had not been successful. I decided to skip the self-assessment and hope the students had at least paid attention to what I had communicated about the criteria.

After the experience of trying to read through a long rubric with the students, I knew that this activity wasn't an effective use of class time, nor was it developmentally appropriate for my students. I devised simpler ways to communicate the information to my students. Sometimes, I created lists of questions that students would be aware of before, during and after the art-making process. For a third grade unit titled, "In My Shoes", students used the questions: "Did you write and draw about how shoes tell about who you are and what you do?", "Did you look at a shoe and draw the lines and shapes you see?" and "Did you draw a place where your shoes take you inside of your shoe?" to guide their progress. I also showed a variety of different examples of artwork. Although I began with the teacher-made examples, I continued to show examples of student work during various stages of the art-making process. By sharing different ways that students had chosen to create their drawings, students began to feel more confident and free to try something new. The motivation level of the students increased dramatically when they realized that there were many ways to draw.

Student Work

My final goal for implementing new assessment procedures was to utilize the process-portfolio. I had always valued self-reflection as an important part of the art-making process, but after the assessment course, I was reenergized to utilize reflection for both individual units and the portfolio. I began incorporating a reflection component at the end of most units for all my students, from Kindergarten to third grade. For the youngest students, reflection was a way for them to tell more about their art and the ideas behind it. For example, Kindergarteners, who were studying the big idea of reality and fantasy, created mixed media robots. Each robot was supposed to help them with a real-

life problem. Students were able to tell about their fantasy by writing statements such as "my robot can cook eggs for me and my mom and brother" and "my robot can help me with my homework." Older students shared more in-depth thoughts about their work. One student reflected on the meaning of his shoe drawing by writing, "In my sneakers is a big city and trees. Because I like it…it looks like [a] city that I like to walk around." Another wrote, "I drew the movie theater. My drawing means to me that me and my mom go to the movie theater and see movies." These reflections connected the artwork to the big idea of place and helped students to communicate their feelings about their art.

Through the use of portfolios, I intended to continue having students reflect on their work. One of the differences that make process-portfolios unique is the component of select and varied work. After students created their portfolios out of tag board and decorated them, I wasn't sure how to proceed with the content of portfolios. I wanted students to select their artwork and reflect on those individual pieces, as well as their growth as a whole. However, I was worried that the writing components would be too lengthy for students and the concepts would be too abstract. I had gotten in the routine of going through each question on a worksheet with the whole class to ensure that students understood the question. If I did this with the portfolio reflection, I was worried that it would be very time-intensive and students would become resistant to the activity.

I decided to start small and work with the youngest students to find out if they could be reflective about their artwork as a whole. I choose five students in Kindergarten to work with outside of class. Armed with my tape recorder, the student portfolios and the worksheets, the students and I were ready. Instead of having the students write, I asked the questions orally and each student shared their answer. After looking at all their

artwork carefully, I prompted the students to hold up the artwork that was their best work. Students were excited and easily were able to choose a piece of artwork to hold up. I listened while each student talked about what artwork they chose and why it was their best. It was clear that students took pride in their work and their choices reflected a variety of different media and subject matter. Daniella chose a paper mask she had made, sharing, "because it looks like a mask…I like it because it has a face and it's my friend. And it's happy like me." Jah-Torah shared, "This one, my robot one, my friend…it's my best friend forever." These responses indicated that many of the students were proud of the work that was not just visually pleasing, but also had a special meaning for them. Elijah chose a practice painting, depicting lines and shapes. He shared, "I like it when I did it really colorful." Elijah's choice differed than the other students, as he was the only who chose a non-objective artwork.

The next direction for the Kindergarten students was to pick an artwork that they could change and make better. Daniella selected a practice painting, stating, "I want to make it more better and more colorful. [I can make it better] if I draw more hearts and make it more colorful and lighter." Yamil shared that he would change a drawing of his home, saying, "I would write neater and put more stuff in it…and draw neater". Jah-Torah chose her mask as the artwork she would like to change. At first, she said she would "make it more pretty." After some prompting, she shared exactly how she would change it. "I would put a mouth, smiling, with no teeth and ears with hair, but not a beard." The responses showed that the students were able to reflect on their artistic choices, noticing aspects of their work that looked unfinished, as Yamil's response indicates. It was also clear that many students thought art should always look "pretty".

Jah-Torah's statements show that because her mask was not "pretty", she wanted to change it. It also appeared that she wanted it to look like a girl, pointing out that it should not have a beard.

Finally, students were asked to tell about how they have developed their art skills this year. This proved to be a difficult concept for them. Elijah described how drawing a dog's tail was difficult for him at first. By looking at the practice drawing he had made, Elijah was able to articulate the drawing process, "I [got better at drawing the tail] when I did whatever line I want, like a wiggly one." Yamil shared how he felt overall about his skills as an artist, "I drew neater and I had fun drawing. [I am better at] drawing different kinds of things…like a cat and a dog and a horse." However, some students' responses did not show evidence of true reflection. Elijah said, "I've always been good at drawing and painting. I never been sloppy." Jah-Torah shared that she was better at "painting, drawing, and making stuff with string, and making necklace and making bracelet." Although this might have been, true, she seemed to be listing things she liked to do outside of school, since she had never created jewelry in art class. Out of all the questions, the concept of improvement over time was the most challenging for the students. Most of the students' responses were vague and didn't directly relate to the artwork they were looking at. Looking back, I could have helped students by having them organized their work from beginning to end, concentrating on one skill at a time. However, this would require more time and direct instruction.

Conclusion

This year was the first year of many in my journey to make assessment in the elementary art classroom meaningful, effective and authentic. Although there were many

areas that I was unsure about and even some that failed, I was able to implement many positive changes into my practice. By developing assessment tasks along with my lesson objectives and student activities, I became more focused on the big picture. Seeking to align my curriculum with assessment tasks helped me to eliminate tasks that were peripheral. Instead, I was more selective with curriculum content and student tasks. It also forced me to define the criteria for student performance more clearly and communicate the most important standards to students. Authentic assessments such as the proposal for a public artwork proved to be highly motivating activities for students. Even though the activity could have been improved to make it more true-to-life, the students were still able to apply their knowledge to the problem.

Developing specialized rubrics for each unit was a major change from my practice of using generic rubrics for each project. I was worried that these rubrics would be so time-intensive that I would not be able to keep up with them all year. Although sometimes I did fall behind, I realized that the extra time it took to prepare the rubrics actually saved me time in the end by making the assessment process easier and faster. I no longer felt like I was the "grade fairy" giving grades based on intuition. Instead, I had criteria to back up my decisions. I also noticed a higher number of students meeting the standards. Because there were clearly set criteria that students were aware of all throughout the unit, students were never surprised by the grades they had received. Developing specific and detailed rubrics were a benefit to everyone.

Although the process-folios are still a work in progress, I am hopeful that they, too, will prove to be a meaningful tool for reflection and assessment. I learned that even young students can grasp the concept of looking at their work and reflecting on their

ability. They were able to indicate both positive and negative qualities in their work, showing greater maturity than I had expected. I also learned that to effectively reflect on artwork inside the portfolios, students would need more guidance. Sorting the artwork by date would be extremely important in order for students to assess how they have improved over the course of the year. I also would like to utilize sketchbooks or folders in order for students to give students a separate space to do brainstorming, sketches and reflections in. Many of the students seemed to lose the papers during the process of passing back their work. It also was difficult for some students to identify what brainstorming activities went with final artworks and vice versa. By utilizing sketchbooks or "idea folders" in the beginning of the year, students would have had a much easier time keeping track of their progress throughout the year.

Assessment in art education is a complex issue with no simple solution. No matter what methods are chosen, teachers must first define what they want students to know and do. Then, by aligning the curriculum and assessment tasks, using effective and meaningful assessment methods and communicating the criteria clearly, the cycle of instruction and assessment work together to improve student learning. "By doing so we will have a system of teaching and learning that is truly constructivist—one that has linked instruction to the proper method of assessment and evaluation" (Casas, 2003). In my efforts to align my assessment with my curriculum, communicate my assessment criteria and to implement process-folios, I had both successes and failures. Like any teacher in the process of evolving, I expect to continue to refine my practice many more times. However, I am confident that my beliefs about assessment and my teaching practices have benefited from the changes I have made.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Before I enrolled in the Mostly Online Master's Program at Ohio State University, I had been teaching elementary art for four years. There were many aspects of my teaching practice that I was proud of. I valued art from many different cultures and time periods and tried to include this diversity in my curriculum. My students could identify many different artists and styles of art as a result. My curriculum also included many different forms of art-making that students were able to build on each year. However, there seemed to be a lack of originality in the students' artwork. They were following step-by-step processes that lead them to create a certain kind of work. There wasn't much time for developing ideas and making connections. I used big ideas for most of my units with older elementary students and occasionally even with the younger students, but the big ideas were not investigated very deeply. In fact, for some of the units, students were not even aware of the big idea, let alone the guiding questions or key concepts. The units were stand-alone units that didn't flow. There was little time for self-reflection or critical dialogue. I was yearning for a way to make art education more meaningful and fulfilling.

When I first began the OSU program in the summer of 2009, I thought I knew all about big ideas. I had been trained to use big ideas in undergraduate school and had even attended a professional development workshop on big ideas in my first year of teaching. However, I quickly discovered that there were more to big ideas that I had first realized. I listened to Dr. Walker discuss how big ideas are used in the classroom by teachers to create a curriculum that relates to art, students lives' and the world around them. Then,

we viewed examples of contemporary artists who use big ideas in their own work. A light bulb went off in my head. I realized that using big ideas was about investigation. Instead, I had treated big ideas like a theme, designing projects to fit the theme without giving students a chance to make real connections to it. Dr. Walker's course set the groundwork for the rest of the program, using big ideas to inspire students to make meaningful connections through art.

Throughout the following year, I continued to learn more about the ingredients needed to make a meaningful curriculum. Learning about art-making, critical dialogue, curriculum development, assessment and service learning helped me to gain a deeper understanding about the role that each plays in art education. I started to see how each component was essential to the big picture of art education. As a result, my practice changed in many important ways. The most important change I made was investigating big ideas more consistently and more thoroughly. I now utilize big ideas with all grades, not only communicating the big ideas to students, but also referring to the guiding questions frequently. Students are making more personal connections to the big ideas by taking time to develop their ideas prior to beginning an in-depth art-making activity. Although I have always used preliminary sketching and brainstorming in my instruction, I am now including it in a more meaningful way, as it relates to the big idea instead of just exercises in skill. Students are also doing more writing and reflecting about their ideas and artworks. The artworks show more personal connections to the big idea as a result. I have also changed my curriculum so that one big idea might be investigated for several units, in different ways. By approaching curriculum this way, the units are more cohesive and the connections to the big idea are more thorough.

Another major change in my instruction is the use of contemporary artists and visual culture. Prior to the OSU program, my teaching contained almost no contemporary artists and very little visual culture. Although, it is still a work in progress, I have made the effort to include some contemporary artists in each grade level's curriculum. Students have been interested to see and hear about living artists who are working with big ideas like they are. By viewing art that has a deeper meaning, students have been able to broaden their definition of what an artist is. With the addition of visual culture in the curriculum, students are more motivated than ever. Because they can easily relate to visual culture, students have been much more enthusiastic and eager about the art-making process.

Finally, my understanding of assessment has drastically changed. Instead of relating assessment directly to grading, I now view assessment as an important part of the cycle of teaching and learning. It is not an end point, but a way to gauge how students are performing in order to better inform my instruction. I also realized how important it is to develop meaningful assessment tools. I now begin writing unit plans with assessment in mind, trying to align the assessment tools with my objectives and learning activities. The process of creating specific rubrics for each unit is needed in order to effectively communicate to students what they should know or do and it forces me to be consistent with my assessments. Another component of assessment that I had never considered was the use of process-folios in order to make assessment more student-centered. This reflective method has inspired me to try different practices for passing back artwork and reflecting on student art in the classroom.

Although I haven't been able to implement all of the changes in my practice as of yet, I am eager to continue to incorporate more of the elements from our coursework. I am especially interested in including more service learning opportunities in the classroom. After reading about the successes of so many of my classmates with their service learning experiences, I would like to attempt another service learning project in the future. It's clear that students really valued and learned from the experience. I would also like to continue to try including critiques in the classroom. Although I attempted it on a small scale several times throughout the year, I am still struggling with the logistics of it. Having young students who are extremely active and have short attention spans, I haven't successfully implemented an in-depth critique. I am interested in learning more ways of making critiques engaging and active for students.

The Ohio State Mostly Online Master's program completely revitalized my teaching practices. It allowed me to view my curriculum and instruction with fresh eyes and realize some of the inconsistencies and weak areas of my practice. I now feel that I have the ingredients of a meaningful art education in place, but the recipe stills needs a little perfecting. By continuing to utilize big ideas, contemporary artists and visual culture, I hope to develop even more meaningful curriculum for my students. I also want to experiment with critical dialogue in the classroom, authentic assessment and service learning to enhance the overall art experience. Without enrolling in the master's program at OSU, my teaching would have remained more theme-based and shallow. Now, I have the knowledge and insight to challenge my students to investigate big ideas, make connections and reflect on their own learning.

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Appendix A: UNIT PLAN: MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Rationale: Students are beginning the year with a greater awareness of who they are. The big idea of "place" is a unifying theme that reminds students what they have in common with each other. Yet, the related topic of "my neighborhood" allows students to personalize the big idea to relate to their lives. This project will focus on identifying places in students' neighborhoods that are special to them.

Big Idea: Place

Related Topic: My Neighborhood

Key Concepts:	Essential Ideas
-Neighborhoods are about different people coming together in one place. -Neighborhoods can change over time. -Neighborhoods can influence one's identity.	-Where do you live? -How does your neighborhood influence who you are? -What does it mean to be an American? a New Yorker? A Harlem-ite?

Objectives:

1. Students will identify unique qualities of their neighborhood and how it influences who they are.
2. Students will utilize painting and dry media to create lines and geometric shapes that represent their city.

Materials:

- Cardboard strips (cut to 1x3 and 2x3)
- Black tempera paint
- Paper towels
- Styrofoam trays
- Buckets of water for hand-washing
- Sponges for clean-up
- Crayons
- 18x24 in. manila tagboard
- Photographs of Harlem

Artist: Edward Hopper

Hopper a prominent American realist painter, living from 1882 to 1967. His most popular subjects are American landscapes, rural and urban life and seascapes. Hopper's paintings highlight the seemingly mundane and typical scenes in our everyday life. His paintings often have a sense of isolation and loneliness. He was especially interested in capturing shadows and highlights.

Artwork: *House by the Railroad*

In 1925, he produced *House by the Railroad*. This classic work depicts an isolated Victorian wood mansion in vast fields, by a railroad. It marked Hopper's artistic maturity. Critic Lloyd Goodrich praised the work as "one of the most poignant and desolating pieces of realism." The work is the first of a series of stark rural and urban scenes that uses sharp lines and large shapes, played upon by unusual lighting to capture the lonely mood of his subjects. Though a realist painter, Hopper's "soft" realism simplified shapes and details. He used saturated color to heighten contrast and create mood. Though critics and viewers interpret meaning and mood in these cityscapes, Hopper insisted "I was more interested in the sunlight on the buildings and on the figures than any symbolism."

Artist: Charles Sheeler

Sheeler was an American painter and photographer who coined the term "Precisionist". Both his subject matter and style was hard, flat, big and industrial. His paintings were influenced by his photographs.

Artwork: *American Landscape,* 1930

American Landscape is Sheeler's most famous painting. It depicts a factory with views of a canal, railroad track and buildings. The only nature present is the sky. It is painted in Sheeler's typical cold, hard, industrial style.

Resources:
http://www.artchive.com/artchive/S/sheeler.html
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hopper

Personal Connections:

What will students do?	**What will students learn?**
Students will identify where they live. Students will reflect on what it means to be an American, a New Yorker and a resident of Harlem.	Students will learn that everyone has places that are important to their identity.

Knowledge Base:

What will students do?	**What will students learn?**
Students will view photographs of Harlem and identify places that make up their neighborhood. Students will draw a sketch of their neighborhood. Then, they will share what they have drawn.	Students will learn that neighborhoods are about different people coming together in one place. Students will learn that everyone has a neighborhood and everyone values different things about their neighborhood.

Artistic Knowledge Building:

What will students do?	**What will students learn?**
Students will observe how artists represent different neighborhoods of America. They will identify different lines and shapes that they see in the paintings. Students experiment with a variety of lines and shapes using printing techniques.	Students will learn that artists are influenced by places around them. Students will learn how places can be represented with lines and shapes. Students will learn to manipulate printing media to create lines and shapes in different ways.

Artmaking Activities:

What will students do?	**What will students learn?**
Students will view a painting demonstration and examples of a painted city-scape. Students will use cardboard strips to paint lines that form architectural aspects of their neighborhood. After paintings are dry, students will use crayons to hand-color their city-scape.	Students will learn what a city-scape is and how to create architectural effects with printing techniques. Students will learn to utilize painting and dry media to create lines and shapes that communicate a concept.
Artmaking Problem: How can you create a city-scape of your neighborhood?	**Conceptual Strategy:**
Artmaking Boundaries: Subject Matter: Neighborhood Visual Form: Hand Colored Print Scale: 12x18 in. Media: tempera paint and crayon on tagboard	**Technical Knowledge:** Lines vary in length, thickness, direction, darkness and straightness. Lines create shapes when they are enclosed. Shapes vary in size, edges and sides.

Connections:

What will students do?.	**What will students learn?**
Students will view and interpret another class's city-scapes. They will discuss: -What does this artwork show us? What do you see? -How do you think the artist feels about their neighborhood? How do you know? -How did the tools we used affect the way we made our images? What were the advantages and disadvantages?	Students will learn to value other's artwork. Students will learn to look at images for meaning. Students will learn to compare and contrast images. Students will learn to form their own ideas about what they see. Students will learn the difference between

	interpretation and judgement.

Assessment:

	4	3	2	1
Did you identify unique qualities of your neighborhood and how it influences who you are?	-Drawings of neighborhood contain specific places from memory or photographs -Drawing contains many details that make architecture unique -Writing describes why the places depicted are special to student or community as a whole.	-Drawings of neighborhood contain mostly specific places from memory or photographs -Drawing contains some details that make architecture unique -Writing describes the places with some supporting information or description	-Drawings of neighborhood contain some specific places from memory or photographs -Drawing contains few details that make architecture unique -Writing identifies the places depicted	-Drawings of neighborhood contain no specific places, only generic -Drawing contains lacks details that make architecture unique -Writing does not identify the places depicted
Did you utilize painting and dry media to create lines and geometric shapes that represent your city?	-Image depicts neighborhood in a highly original and thoughtful way -Printed lines are clear and precise -Shapes are varied in size, edges and sides -Hand coloring is within lines and solid	-Image depicts neighborhood in an original and thoughtful way -Printed lines are clear and precise with few smudges -Shapes have some varied in size, edges and sides -Hand coloring is within lines and mostly solid	-Image depicts neighborhood in a generic way with little originality -Printed lines have some smearing and smudges -Hand coloring is inside and outside of lines and colors are not solid	-Image depicts neighborhood in a generic way with no originality -Printed lines have many smearing and smudges -Hand coloring is done sloppily and without care

Appendix B: Shoe Landscapes

Rationale: Students have been exploring the big idea of place through urban environments and public art. This unit will pull both those ideas together with a personal

focus on places that impact our lives. By studying the artist, Juane Quick-to-See Smith, students will interpret how place influences life and art. They will reflect on how shoes can reflect one's identity. Finally, students will identify a place that they have walked in their shoes and create a shoe landscape.

Big Idea: Place

Related Idea: Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Key Concepts:	**Essential Questions:**
-Shoes are about travelling. -Shoes can reflect a person's experiences. -Places can be part of your identity.	-Where do your shoes take you? -What is it like to walk in your shoes? -What do your shoes tell about your journey?

Objectives:

1. Students will listen to *My Shoes and I* by Rene Colato Lainez and identify one way that shoes reflect a person's experiences.
2. Students will interpret Juane Quick-to-See Smith's artwork and identify how shoes are an important symbol for her work.
3. Students will use observational skills to draw their shoes with lines that represent shapes and details.
4. Students will identify a place that is meaningful to their lives by drawing a picture of it from memory.

Materials:

- 12x18 in. drawing paper
- Pencils/erasers
- Sharpies
- Colored pencils
- Pencil sharpeners

References:

http://www.missoulaartmuseum.org/files/documents/Grades%203-4%20Shoe%20Landscapes.pdf
http://www.missoulaartmuseum.org/files/documents/collection/Montana%20Connections_Smith/Kastner_Essay.pdf

Artist: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, born in St. Ignatius, Montana in 1940, is an enrolled member of the Flathead Nation. She was raised by her father, spending time with him riding horses. Her family lived on a reservation, but Smith was able to attend public school. There, she learned about art and decided to go to college to study art. She has lived in New Mexico since the late 1970's, working as an artist, teacher, lecturer, curator and activist. Her powerful commitment to social, environmental and political issues and her expressive, creative voice have established Smith as a dominant figure in contemporary American art. But Smith has always maintained a vital connection to her home and American Indian culture. She has proven her support for the arts with a gift to the MAM Contemporary American Indian Art Collection of her print oeuvre, as well as many other original works by herself and other American Indian artists.

Artwork: *Indian People Wear Shoes and Socks*

Quick-to-See Smith plays with images of Indians locked by the American imagination in some permanent 19th Century moment. Real tribal people live in the same 20th Century world as everyone else and move with ease between the Indian outfits they use for pow wows and ceremonies and modern dress they use every day.

Personal Connections:

Objectives: 1. Students will listen to *My Shoes and I* by Rene Colato Lainez and identify one way that shoes reflect one's identity in writing.	
What will students do? Students will listen to *Two Pairs of Shoes* and discuss how shoes can tell about who a person is. They will write and draw about a pair of shoes and where their shoes take them.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that shoes can tell a story about who a person is and what they do.

Knowledge Building:

Objectives: 1. Students will listen to *My Shoes and I* by Rene Colato Lainez and identify one way that shoes reflect one's identity in writing.	
What will students do? As a whole group, we will review how the phrase, " Don't judge a man until you walk a mile in his shoes" is relevant to our lives. Students will share their shoe drawings and writing with small groups.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that everyone's shoes tell a story about their identity.

Artistic Knowledge Building:

Objectives: 1. Students will view Juane Quick-to-See Smith's artwork and interpret the meaning of shoes in her work.	
What will students do? Then, students will work in small groups. They will pass questions so each has an opportunity to write what they see and what they think it means after viewing the artwork of Juane Quick-to-See Smith. Then, students will share as a whole class.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that moccasins are part of the Native American identity. Socks are part of the European identity. Smith uses these images as symbols for her identity.

Artmaking Activities:

Objectives: 2. Students will use observational skills to draw their shoes with lines that represent shapes and details. 3. Students will identify a place that is meaningful to their lives by drawing a picture of it from memory.	
What will students do? Observational drawing will be introduced	**What will students learn?** Students will learn how to look carefully at

as a way to look carefully at an object while drawing it. Students will first warm up by reviewing different lines in their sketchbook. They will create shapes with these lines. Then, they will discuss the kinds of shapes they see if their own shoes. After sharing, students will watch a demo of doing a blind drawing. Students will use contour lines to continue warming up their drawing skills. Then, students will learn to use gesture drawing to draw the form. Finally, students will use their own style of drawing to draw the whole shoe. Once they have completed a final drawing, trace with sharpie marker, leaving spaces inside. Students will review the places their shoes take them. They will discuss the vocabulary "landscape", "foreground" and "background". They will draw sketches of a place where their shoes take them and draw a final drawing inside their shoe drawing. They will color their drawings with colored pencils.	an object and recognize shapes and lines. Students will learn to become comfortable drawing from observation. Students will learn to draw a landscape using foreground and background. Students will learn to use colored pencils to layer colors.

Reflections:

Objectives: 1. Students will identify a place that is meaningful to their lives by drawing a picture of it from memory.	
What will students do? Then, students will share their artwork and discuss how their art shows what places their shoes take them.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that looking at art can be a way of meaning-making.

Assessment:

	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
Students will identify how shoes tell about someone's experiences after viewing Juane Quick-to-See Smith's artwork and listening to *My Shoes and I* by	-Students identify how Juane Quick-to-See Smith uses shoes and socks to represent her Native American and American experiences -Students	-Students recognizes the different shoes and socks in Juane Quick-to-See Smith's work but does not make a connection to her Native American and	-Students does not recognize Juane Quick-to-See Smith's use of shoes and socks in her work -Students does not make connections between the	-Students does not identify how Juane Quick-to-See Smith uses shoes to represent her Native American and American experiences

Rene Colato Lainez.	makes multiple connections between the character in the book's experiences and his shoes -Sketches depict shoes and at least one experience the student has had in their shoes -Student writes about one personal experience in their shoes	American experiences -Students makes one connection between the character in the book's experiences and his shoes -Sketches depict shoes and one experience the student has had in their shoes -Student writes about their shoes or a place they have gone.	character in the book's experiences and his shoes -Sketch depicts only shoes with no evidence of a personal experience -Student does not write about a personal experience in their shoes	-Students does not make connections between the character in the book's experiences and his shoes -Sketches does not depict shoes or an experience the student has had in their shoes -Student does not write about a personal experience in their shoes
Students will use observational skills to draw their shoes with lines that represent shapes and details.	-Sketches show evidence of careful observation of shoes (using more than one drawing style learned: contour drawing, gesture drawing or students' own drawing style) -Final drawing has multiple details that show evidence of observation of shoe -Drawing uses shapes and lines that are found in the actual shoe -Drawings are	-Sketches show evidence of some observation of shoes (using at least one drawing style learned: contour drawing, gesture drawing or students' own drawing style) -Final drawing has at least one detail that show evidence of observation of shoe -Drawing uses shapes and lines that are found in a shoe, but don't reflect the	-Sketches do not show evidence of observation of shoes, but student has used at least one drawing style learned: contour drawing, gesture drawing or students' own drawing style -Final drawing does not contain details that show evidence of observation of shoe, drawing is generic -Drawing uses shapes and lines that are	-Sketches do not show evidence of observation of shoes and have not used any of the drawing styles learned: contour drawing, gesture drawing or students' own drawing style -Final drawing is not complete, important parts of shoe are missing -Drawings are messy or contain additions that are not purposeful

	neat and purposeful	actual shoe -Drawings are mostly neat and purposeful	found in a shoe, but don't reflect the actual shoe -Drawings are messy or contain additions that are not purposeful	
Students will identify a place that is meaningful to their lives by drawing a picture of it from memory.	-Drawings have many details that give a clear picture of the place -Drawings are colored completely with no empty white space except for areas that are intended to be white -Students write at least one reason why the place was chosen and how it is meaningful to them	-Drawings have some details that provide information about the place -Drawings are colored with few areas of empty white space -Students write at least one reason why the place was chosen but it doesn't tell why it is meaningful to them	-Drawings have little to no details that make it hard to depict a place -Drawings are not completed, there are many areas of empty white space -Students write which place was chosen but do not tell why or how it is meaningful to them	-Drawings do not depict a place -Drawings are absent or not completed, there are many areas of empty white space -Students do not write anything about their place

Appendix C: Unit Plan: Stick Puppets

Big Idea: Stories

Related Topic: Telling a Story through Puppetry

Rationale: Students are familiar with stories and the reasons people tell stories. They have been exposed to different ways of telling stories. This unit will help students to realize all people are characters in our own stories. We can imagine what we want our stories to be and communicate those stories. After learning about the history of puppetry with a focus on shadow puppets, students will create a stick puppet that communicates who they want to be in the future.

Key Concepts:	**Essential Questions:**

-Stories can be real or fantasy. -Stories are about communicating. -Stories are about characters and plot.	-Why do people tell stories? -How do people tell stories? -How are puppets used to tell stories? -What is the story you want your life to tell?

Objective:

1. Students will understand how puppets tell a story by viewing and discussing puppets from different cultures.
2. Students will understand body proportions by creating a skeleton for their puppet using popsicle sticks.
3. Students will identify their future goals through art-making media.
4. Students will interpret the meaning of various puppets by looking at them and discussing what they see.

Artwork:

1. Wayang Kulit (Shadow puppets from Indonesia), buffalo leather and buffalo horn rods.

   These shadow puppet shows can last 6 hours or more. They include music and singing. The puppet master (dalang) is the single person in charge of moving the puppets and playing their voices.

2. Wayang Kulit (Shadow puppets from Malaysia), leather and sticks or buffalo horn rods.

   These puppets often tell mythical stories that have a moral.

3. Chinese Shadow Puppets

   China was the origin of shadow puppets, about 2,000 years ago. Made of leather and sticks, these puppets tell stories of fairy tales and myths and are accompanied by music.

Resources:

http://discover-indo.tierranet.com/wayang.html - Discover Indonesia website includes a very thorough and kid-friendly explanation of the history and culture of shadow puppets in Indonesia.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_play - Wikipedia's page covers the different cultures that have shadow puppetry, its history and diverse styles.

Procedures:

Personal Connections:

Objectives: 1. Students will identify their future goals through art-making media.	
What will students do? Students will think about the big idea of stories, listing as a whole class the different ways that people tell stories. Students will focus on telling stories through art. They will listen to an explanation of how we are characters in the story of life. Students will identify what they want to do when they grow up and draw a picture of themselves as an adult.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that stories can be shared in many different ways. Students will learn that art is a way to communicate a story. They will learn that some stories are real and others are fantasy.

Knowledge Building:

Objectives: **2.** Students will understand how puppets tell a story by viewing and discussing puppets from different cultures.	
What will students do? Students will look at puppets and discuss what puppets are used for and what kinds of characters the puppets might show. They will listen to a brief explanation of how shadow puppets from different cultures are made and used in a puppet show.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that puppetry is used to tell stories in many cultures. They will learn that shadow puppets have a long history and importance in many Asian countries.

Art Knowledge Building:

Objectives: 1. Students will understand how puppets tell a story by viewing and discussing puppets from different cultures.

What will students do?	**What will students learn?**
Students will view an example of a stick puppet made with popsicle sticks and painted paper. They will identify parts of the body that have moveable joints. Then, they will experiment with popsicle sticks on paper to create a skeleton of a body, paying attention to joints that move.	They will learn that shadow puppets are constructed with a flat image and sticks. They will learn to identify parts of the body and joints that move.

Art-Making Activities:

Objectives:	
1. Students will understand body proportions by creating a skeleton for their puppet using popsicle sticks. 2. Students will identify their future goals through art-making media.	
What will students do?	**What will students learn?**
Students will view a demonstration of how to work in pairs to create a skeleton. One person will act as the "model", acting out the "artists'" dream, while the other person acts as the "artist", arranging the sticks in the shape of the model. The "artists" will receive their paper, writing their name on it and begin arranging their sticks in shape of the model. Students will glue their sticks on the paper. Then, students will switch roles and they will create their skeletons. After the glue is dry, students will draw the shape of their body around the sticks, paying attention to details such as their clothing, their hair and other objects. Students will cut out the silhouette of their drawing. Then, they will turn it over and draw details with a pencil on the clean side. They will trace the drawings with a black permanent marker and then color inside with watercolor markers.	Students will learn that they can create a shadow puppet using paper and sticks. Students will learn the basic body proportions of a person. Students will learn how a silhouette is important to shadow puppets. Students will learn how to emphasize their lines with black outlines.

Students will attach a dowel rod to the back of their puppets using tape.	

Reflection:

Objectives: 1. Students will interpret the meaning of various puppets by looking at them and discussing what they see.	
What will students do? Students will view a variety of different student puppets from the other 2nd grade class. They will discuss what they see and what it tells about the artist's dreams.	**What will students learn?** Students will learn that their puppets communicate a story. Students will learn that interpreting visual images are important to how we understand things.

Assessment:

Students will understand how puppets tell a story by viewing and discussing puppets from different cultures. Students will understand body proportions by creating a skeleton for their puppet using popsicle sticks.	-Students are attentive by looking and giving visual clues that they are listening to the discussion and thinking about what they see -Students will contribute to the discussion more than once by telling what they and inferring about what puppets are used for, what kind of character the puppet is or how they are used to tell a story.	-Students are attentive most of the time by looking and giving visual clues that they are listening to the discussion and thinking about what they see -Students will contribute to the discussion at least once by telling what they and inferring about what puppets are used for, what kind of character the puppet is or how they are used to tell a story.	-Students are attentive some of the time by looking and giving visual clues that they are listening to the discussion and thinking about what they see -Students do not contribute to the discussion	-Students are not attentive to the discussion -Students do not contribute to the discussion
Students will	-Sketches	-Sketches	-Sketches	-Student does

identify their future goals through art-making media.	contain many details to depict the student's dream -Student writes a statement that tells what they want to do when they grow up. -Puppet is constructed with attention to detail: body is proportioned in a realistic way, body is positioned specifically to what the person is doing, drawing contains many details. -Puppet is colored carefully and purposefully: all pencil lines are outlines with black, areas are colored completely with no empty areas, coloring is neat and inside the lines.	contain some details to depict the student's dream -Student writes a statement that tells what they want to do when they grow up. -Puppet is constructed with some attention to detail: body is proportioned in a somewhat realistic way, drawing contains details relevant to the dream. -Puppet is colored purposefully: most pencil lines are outlines with black, areas are colored completely with few empty areas, coloring is neat and mostly inside the lines.	contain few details, the dream of the student is elusive -Student does not write a statement that tells what they want to do when they grow up. -Puppet is constructed with little attention to detail: body is made with impossible proportions, drawing contains few details relevant to the dream. -Puppet is colored with little care or purpose: pencil lines are not outlined with black or areas are colored in with black, there are many empty areas, coloring is messy and out of the lines	not sketch their dream -Student does not write a statement that tells what they want to do when they grow up. -Puppet is constructed with major problems: body is made with impossible proportions, sticks are visible on the outside of the puppet, drawing is not relevant to the dream. -Puppet is colored with little care or purpose: pencil lines are not outlined with black or areas are colored in with black, there are many empty areas, there are scribbles all over the puppet
Students will interpret the meaning of various puppets by looking at them and discussing what they see.	-Students are attentive by looking and giving visual clues that they are listening to the discussion and thinking	-Students are attentive most of the time by looking and giving visual clues that they are listening to the discussion	-Students are attentive some of the time by looking and giving visual clues that they are listening to the discussion	-Students are not attentive to the discussion -Students do not contribute to the discussion

	about what they see -Students will contribute to the discussion more than once by telling what they and inferring about what puppets are used for, what kind of character the puppet is or how they are used to tell a story.	and thinking about what they see -Students will contribute to the discussion at least once by telling what they and inferring about what puppets are used for, what kind of character the puppet is or how they are used to tell a story.	and thinking about what they see -Students do not contribute to the discussion	